

PRESS RELEASE

September 15, 2006

**RE: UNITED STATES v. LEONARD RALPH GRUNTZ
05-CR-303-S**

United States Attorney Terrance P. Flynn announced today that Leonard Ralph Gruntz, age 39, of Lockport, New York, was sentenced as a result of his March 23, 2006 plea of guilty to one count of Unlawfully and Knowingly Possessing a Firearm, to wit, a destructive device that was made in violation of law, in violation of Title 26, United States Code, Section 5861(c). The defendant was sentenced by the Honorable William M. Skretny, United States District Court Judge, Western District of New York to a period of 18 months incarceration, to be followed by a three year period of supervised release.

Assistant United States Attorney Richard P. Maigret handled the prosecution of this case. Mr. Maigret stated that the case arose out of an incident that occurred at the defendant's residence on July 23, 2005. On that date, Niagara County Deputy Sheriffs were dispatched to the defendant's residence after the defendant called 911 and told them that he had barricaded himself in the house and was going to blow it up. When the deputies arrived, the defendant refused to exit his house. As more deputies arrived on the scene a sound like a gun shot came from

the residence.

The Niagara County Sheriff's Department Emergency Response Team, Canine Units and the County Air Unit were called to the scene along with the Niagara County Sheriff, the Under-Sheriff, a Chief Deputy and a Captain. A perimeter was secured around the house and negotiations ensued with the defendant, however, the defendant refused to exit the house. During the course of the negotiations, the defendant threw one "Molotov Cocktail" over a fence on the western side of his property. This destructive device landed on the shoulder of Day Road and ignited a portion of that shoulder.

After about five hours of negotiation, the defendant appeared at the front door of his residence with a firearm slung over his shoulder and another Molotov Cocktail in his hand. The defendant lit the Molotov Cocktail and threw it into his pick-up truck that was parked in front of the house, thereby igniting the pick-up truck. The defendant then retreated back into his residence.

The Niagara County Sheriff's Department Emergency Response Team provided protection for firefighters who were able to extinguish the burning pick-up truck. After the fire was extinguished, members of the Niagara County Sheriff's Department

deployed multiple tear-gas canisters into the residence, forcing the defendant out of the resident and onto a first-floor roof. The defendant was subsequently taken into custody by the Niagara County Sheriff's Department without further incident. During this entire negotiations and incident, no shots were fired by the Niagara County Sheriff's Department Officers at the scene nor was anyone, including the defendant, injured.

Because of the defendant's use of a Molotov Cocktail, which is considered a destructive device under Federal Law, the Niagara County District Attorney's Office referred this matter for federal prosecution to the United States Attorney's Office for the Western District of New York under the Project Safe Neighborhood. Project Safe Neighborhood involves a cooperative effort between, in this case the Niagara County District Attorney's Office and the United States Attorney's Office for the Western District of New York with regard to the prosecution of firearm offenses. The present conviction is an example of such cooperation.

This conviction was a result of an investigation and arrest conducted by the Niagara County Sheriff's Department, under the direction of Sheriff Thomas A. Beilein, and assisted by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, from the Buffalo Field Office, under the direction of Resident Agent In

Charge David P. DeJoe.